

***New Jersey AmeriCorps Competitive
Notice of Funding Opportunity***

**Chris Christie
Governor**

**Kim Guadagno
Lt. Governor**

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For Program Year 2015/2016

Application Due Date: December 15, 2014

**NEW JERSEY COMMISSION ON NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE
NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF STATE
P.O. Box 456
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-633-9627**

Funding provided by the Corporation on National and Community Service

CFDA # 94.006

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SECTION 1: GRANT PROGRAM INFORMATION

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE GRANT PROGRAM

AmeriCorps is a national service network that provides full- and part-time opportunities for participants, called members, to serve their communities and build the capacity of organizations to meet local needs. The New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service, New Jersey Department of State, seeks to fund local initiatives and utilize the AmeriCorps model to increase civic responsibility and improve New Jersey's communities by deploying AmeriCorps members to provide services in the six focus areas identified in the Serve America Act. These focus areas are:

- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity, including My Brother's Keeper
- Education, including STEM
- Environmental Stewardship
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families

Through this AmeriCorps Competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service (hereinafter, the Commission) seeks submission of applications that demonstrate that they will engage AmeriCorps members in an evidence-informed and evidence-based approach to providing a service intervention that will result in intended solutions to community problems (e.g., based on proposed program's performance and evaluation data or research demonstrating the effectiveness of a similar intervention). Applicants will be awarded points for providing evidence that their proposal intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change (logic model). Applicants shall provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge.

A. Purpose of AmeriCorps Funding

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic participation through service and volunteering. CNCS -- through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Social Innovation Fund, and the Volunteer Generation Fund -- has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action.

AmeriCorps grants are awarded to eligible organizations proposing to engage AmeriCorps members in evidence-based or evidence-informed interventions to strengthen communities. An AmeriCorps member is an individual who engages in community service through an approved national service position. Members may receive a living allowance and other benefits while serving. Upon successful completion of their service, members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award from the National Service Trust that members can use to pay for higher education expenses or apply to qualified student loans.

Through all its programs, CNCS seeks to expand economic opportunity -- helping Americans acquire the skills, education, and training they need for productive employment. By helping more Americans graduate, pursue higher education, and find work, national service can provide immediate and long term benefits by expanding individual opportunity, building family stability, and creating more sustainable, resilient communities.

CNCS may award a Cost Reimbursement grant to any successful applicant, but the availability of a Fixed Amount grant is limited to certain applicants.. In addition to the funding allocated for competitive distribution under this *Notice*, CNCS provides funding based on the population directly to Governor-appointed State Service Commissions which they, in turn, award through a process they administer according to state priorities.

This *Notice* should be read together with the AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520–2550, the *Notice* Glossary, Application Instructions, and the Performance Measure Instructions which are incorporated by reference. The documents can be found at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities>. The full regulations are available online at www.ecfr.gov. The TTY number is 800-833-3722. For a printed copy of related material, call 202-606-7508.

B. Focus Areas

In order to carry out Congress' intent and to maximize the impact of investment in national service, CNCS and the NJ Commission is targeting AmeriCorps funds to the following focus areas:

Disaster Services

Grant activities will provide support to increase the preparedness of individuals for disasters, improve individuals' readiness to respond to disasters, help individuals recover from disasters, and/or help individuals mitigate disasters. Grantees also have the ability to respond to national disasters under CNCS cooperative agreements and FEMA mission assignments.

Economic Opportunity

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to the improved economic well-being and security of economically disadvantaged people; help economically disadvantaged people, including youth identified in My Brother's Keeper, to have improved access to services that enhance financial literacy; transition into or remain in safe, healthy, affordable housing; and/or have improved employability leading to increased success in becoming employed.

Education

Grants will provide support and/or facilitate access to services and resources that contribute to improved educational outcomes for economically disadvantaged children; improved school readiness for economically disadvantaged young children; improved educational and behavioral outcomes of students in low-achieving elementary, middle, and high schools; and/or support economically disadvantaged students prepare for success in post-secondary educational institutions.

Environmental Stewardship

Grants will provide support for increased individual behavioral change leading to increased energy efficiency, renewable energy use, and ecosystem improvements particularly for economically disadvantaged households and communities. Grant activities will decrease energy and water consumption; improve at-risk ecosystems; increase behavioral changes that lead directly to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems; and/or increase green training opportunities that may lead to decreased energy and water consumption or improved at-risk ecosystems.

Healthy Futures

Grants will provide support for activities that will improve access to primary and preventive health care for communities served by CNCS-supported programs; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition in youth with the purpose of reducing childhood obesity.

Veterans and Military Families

Grants will positively impact the quality of life of veterans and improve military family strength; increase the number of veterans, military service members, and their families served by CNCS-supported programs; and/or increase the number of veterans and military family members engaged in service through CNCS-supported programs.

2015 AmeriCorps Funding Priorities

CNCS seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in:

- Disaster Services -- improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation
- Economic Opportunity -- increasing economic opportunities for communities, specifically opportunity youth (see Glossary), both as the population served and as AmeriCorps members.
- Education -- improving student academic performance including STEM
- Environment -- 21st Century Service Corps (see Glossary)
- Veterans and Military Families -- positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength
- Governor and Mayor Initiatives (see Glossary)
- Programing that supports My Brother's Keeper (see Glossary)
- Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure. i.e. rural and other underserved communities. (See Glossary)

In order to receive priority consideration, applicants must demonstrate that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high quality program design. Responses that propose programs for the purpose of receiving priority consideration are not guaranteed funding.

C. Additional Program Models

Encore Programs

Congress set a goal that 10 percent of AmeriCorps funding should support encore service programs that engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older. CNCS seeks to meet that 10 percent target in this competition and encourages encore programs to apply.

Professional Corps

Professional Corps programs recruit and place qualified members in positions as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Applicants are eligible to apply for funding for a portion of the program costs. Professional Corps members' salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. In order to be considered for funding, applicants must demonstrate that there are an inadequate number of professionals in the community(ies) where the corps seeks to place members. These grants can either be fixed amount or cost reimbursement grants.

D. National Performance Measures

The Serve America Act (SAA) emphasizes measuring the impact of service and focusing on a core set of issue areas. CNCS' five-year Strategic Plan establishes an ambitious set of objectives that guide the development of 16 agency-wide Priority Performance Measures. CNCS expects organizations to use National Performance Measures as part of a comprehensive performance measurement strategy that relies on both performance and evaluation data to learn from its work as well as make tactical and strategic

adjustments to achieve its goals. For more information, please refer to the National Performance Measure Instructions.

1.2 AWARD INFORMATION

The Corporation for National and Community Service and the Commission are offering the opportunity to compete for a three-year cycle of Competitive AmeriCorps programs. **Awards from this competitive NOFO will implement the first year of the program which runs from September 1, 2015 to August 31, 2016.**

A. Funding Available

CNCS expects a highly competitive AmeriCorps FY 2015 grant competition. CNCS expects to award new, re-competing, and continuation AmeriCorps grants. The actual level of funding will be subject to the availability of annual appropriations, which have not yet been made.

B. Award Amount

Awards will be for funds and AmeriCorps member slots. CNCS will review applications and determine the appropriate award amount, if any. Award amounts vary.

C. Project/Award Period

Unless otherwise specified, the grant covers a three-year project period. In approving a multi-year project period, CNCS generally makes an initial award for the first year of operation. In most cases, the application is submitted with a one-year budget. Continuation funding is not guaranteed. Factors considered in awarding continuation grants include satisfactory performance, demonstrated capacity to manage the grant, compliance with grant requirements, agency priorities, and the availability of appropriated funds. CNCS and the NJ Commission reserve the right to adjust the amount of a grant or elect not to continue funding for subsequent years.

The project start date is September 1, 2015 and is generally one year. The project start date may not occur prior to the date CNCS awards the grant. AmeriCorps members may not enroll prior to the start date of the award. AmeriCorps members may not begin service prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period as designated in the grant award. A program may not certify any hours a member performs prior to the beginning of the member enrollment period.

D. Types of Grants

The types of AmeriCorps grants in this competition are described below. CNCS will not provide more than one grant for the same project in one fiscal year. Also see the AmeriCorps State and National Fit Finder to decide which type of grant aligns with the proposed project (<http://www.americorps.gov/fitfinder/>).

- 1. *AmeriCorps State Competitive***

These grants are awarded to fund a portion of program costs and members' living allowance.

- 2. *Professional Corps***

These grants are awarded to organizations that propose to operate a Professional Corps program. Professional Corps programs place AmeriCorps members as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities where there is a documented shortage of such professionals. Applicants are eligible to apply for funding for a portion of program costs. Professional Corps member salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. These grants can either be fixed amount or reimbursement grants.

E. Types of Funding

1. *Cost Reimbursement Grants*

Cost reimbursement grants fund a portion of program operating costs and member living allowances with flexibility to use all of the funds for allowable costs regardless of whether or not the program recruits and retains all AmeriCorps members.

2. *Stipended Full-time Fixed Amount Grants*

Stipended full-time fixed amount grants are available for programs that enroll full-time members only. The grants provide a fixed amount per MSY. Programs can access all of the funds provided if they recruit and retain the members supported under the grant based on the MSY level awarded. Organizations use their own or other resources to cover the remaining cost of the program. Programs are not required to submit federal budgets or financial reports and there is no match requirement. However, CNCS provides only a portion of the cost of running the program and organizations must still raise the additional resources needed to run the program.

Stipended fixed-amount grants are only available to recompeting programs. Second and third-year continuation applicants with cost reimbursement grants must submit a new application if they are interested in applying for a fixed amount grant.

Stipended fixed amount applicants in the Education Focus Area will be required to select either a Priority Education Measure or Complementary Program Measure. Applicants proposing non-Education programs may select from Tiers 1-5. All performance measures will be negotiated prior to grant selection and award. Approved applicants must agree to participate in any relevant evaluations conducted by CNCS.

3. *Professional Corps Fixed Amount Grants*

Programs apply for a fixed amount per MSY and enroll only full-time members. Programs can access all of the funds awarded if they recruit and retain all of their members. Professional Corps member salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve and are not included in the budget. As with stipended fixed amount grants, there are no match or financial reporting requirements.

General Summary

Grant Types	Cost Reimbursement		Fixed Amount		
Available Subtypes	Traditional	Professional Corps	Full-Time/Less than FT serving in a full time capacity	EAP	Professional Corps
Maximum Cost per MSY	\$13,730	Up to \$1,000*	\$13,430	\$800	Up to \$1,000*
Type of Slots in the National Service Trust	All	All	Full-Time or Less than Full-Time serving in a full time capacity Only	All	Full-Time Only
Budget Submission Required	Yes		No		Yes, if requesting operating funds
Availability of Funds linked to enrollment and retention of awarded MSY	No		Yes		
Special Requirements	N/A	Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. Member salaries must be paid entirely by organization where member serves and not included in the budget.	N/A	N/A	Must place qualified professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. No CNCS funds may be used to pay member living allowance or salary.
Match Requirements	Yes	Yes; Living allowance or salary paid to members may not be counted toward the match requirement.	No, but organizations must raise the additional revenue required to operate the program.		
Financial Tracking Requirements	Yes		No		
Available to New Applicants	Yes		No	Yes	Yes

*CNCS' assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. CNCS will consider operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non CNCS resources.

A separate NOFO will be disseminated in late winter or early spring of 2015 for Formula applications. Agencies that apply to this Competitive NOFO will also be considered for the Formula competition. In the event the applicant receives an award for both, the agency will forfeit the Formula award. Only one award for the same project will be funded.

1.3 ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

Eligibility is open to public or private non-profit organizations, including community organizations and faith-based organizations; Local Education Agencies (LEAs) including charter schools; institutions of higher education; government entities within the state (e.g., cities/municipalities, counties, state departments); labor organizations; and partnerships or consortia consisting of the aforementioned. Organizations that have been convicted of a Federal crime are disqualified from receiving the assistance described in this NOFO. Pursuant to the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in Section 501 ©(4), that engages in lobbying activities is not eligible to apply.

AmeriCorps Competitive applications will compete first at the state level and those that achieve a score of 75 or above will be eligible to compete at the national level at the Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps Competitive applications must be selected at both the state and national level in order to receive funding for the program year.

Only applications submitted by agencies that attend one of the technical assistance workshops listed in section 1.5 will be accepted.

New Applicants

CNCS encourages organizations that have never received funding from CNCS or AmeriCorps to apply for the grants described in this NOFO. New organizations should submit applications with the understanding that the general practice is to award no more than 50 member slots for new grantees. New applicants are not eligible to apply for fixed amount grants.

New applicants are eligible to apply for Cost Reimbursement grants but are not eligible to apply for Fixed Amount grants. Existing subgrantees/operating sites of Fixed Amount grantees that can demonstrate a track record and capacity to manage a Fixed Amount grant are considered to have AmeriCorps experience and therefore can apply for Fixed Amount grants.

1.4 STATUTORY/REGULATORY SOURCE AND FUNDING

The applicant's project must be designed and implemented in conformance with all applicable state and federal regulations. In addition to the program requirements outlined in this NOFO, applicants should refer to the new AmeriCorps regulations, 45 CFR §§ 2520-2550 (www.americorps.gov/about/ac/ and [www.americorps_rule_register.pdf](#))

The **AmeriCorps Competitive** program is federally funded and requires a local combination of significant cash and in-kind match.

This is Year 1 of 3 of a multi-year grant period covering the following funding periods:

- Year 1 September 1, 2015 to August 31, 2016
- Year 2 September 1, 2016 to August 31, 2017
- Year 3 September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018

There is a single overall minimum match of 24% for the first three-year funding cycle which gradually increases to 50% by year ten. A more detailed explanation of these match requirements can be found in the *Budget Requirements* section of this NOFO.

The total federal funding for a Cost Reimbursement AmeriCorps program is based on a cost per Member Service Year (MSY) of **\$13,730**. The maximum amount of funds an applicant can receive is dependent on the number of full-time AmeriCorps members requested, multiplied by the maximum cost per MSY of \$13,730. The maximum cost per MSY for Full-time Fixed Amount Grants is \$13,430. The maximum cost per MSY for Professional Corps (cost reimbursement) and for a Professional Corps fixed –amount grants is up to \$1,000*.

*CNCS’ assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. CNCS will consider operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and substantial challenges to raising non CNCS resources.

Programs operating in rural communities (as defined in the Glossary) and programs that recruit opportunity youth as AmeriCorps members may request up to \$13,930 cost per MSY for the AmeriCorps members that will be serving in rural areas or who are opportunity youth. The applicant must include a compelling case as to why the applicant’s cost per MSY must be higher.

1.5 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Three Technical Assistance Workshops will be held:

Tuesday, October 28, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.: Middlesex Fire Academy Auditorium, 1001 Fire Academy Drive, Sayreville, NJ.

Wednesday, November 12, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.: Camden County College, Rm 150A, Regional Emergency Training Center, 420 Woodbury Turnersville Rd., Blackwood, NJ

Thursday, November 13, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.: Passaic County Technical Institute Auditorium, 45 Reinhardt Rd., Wayne, NJ

Only applications submitted by agencies that attend one of the technical assistance sessions listed above will be accepted.

Pre-registration is requested by calling Kathy Daniels at 609-633-9627 or via e-mail at Kathy.Daniels@sos.state.nj.us. Registrants requiring special accommodations for the Technical Assistance Workshops should identify their needs at the time of registration.

1.6 APPLICATION SUBMISSION

1. Notice of Intent to Apply

Submission of a Notice of Intent to Apply is required to be eligible for this competition and is due **Monday, December 8, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time**. Please send an e-mail with your Notice of Intent to Ivette.Ramos@sos.nj.gov.

The NJ Commission will not consider notifications received after the deadline. Failure to submit a Notice of Intent to Apply will render an applicant ineligible to apply. All Notices of Intent to Apply will receive an email response acknowledging receipt.

This NOFO should be read together with the AmeriCorps Regulations which are available online at www.ecfr.gov.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

What are the steps that organizations need to take to apply?

- Determine whether you apply directly to CNCS or through a State Commission
- Submit a request for an alternative match schedule, if applicable
- Submit a Notice of Intent
- Get a DUNS number
- Establish an eGrants account
- Write a high quality application responsive to the *Notice*
- Provide required supplemental materials via email, if applicable
- Submit the application via eGrants by the deadline

The New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service, Department of State operates this grant program in strict conformance with procedures designed to ensure accountability and integrity in the use of public funds and, therefore, ***will not accept late applications***. The responsibility for a timely submission resides with the applicant.

Applications must be submitted electronically on eGrants NO LATER THAN 4:00 PM ON Monday, December 15, 2014.

Applications must be submitted to the corresponding NJ Commission Prime application on eGrants. Once the applicant has verified and submitted their application on eGrants, they must print out the full application and mail **four (4) `copies of it along with 1.) Evaluations, if required. Hard copies of the application should arrive at the Commission office by Wednesday, December 17, 2014.**

Do not submit any other supplementary materials not requested in the application instructions. They will not be reviewed or returned. Please send application copies and, if required, evaluations to the address below:

NJ Commission on National and Community Service
NJ Department of State
PO Box 456, 4th floor
225 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08625
ATTN: Ivette Del Rio Ramos

Using eGrants:

Applicants must submit their applications electronically via the CNCS web-based system, eGrants. Because it is a unique system, it is recommended that applicants create an eGrants account and begin the application creation process at least three weeks before the deadline. Applicants should draft the

application as a word document and copy and paste the document into the appropriate eGrants fields no later than 10 days before the deadline. Please note the length of a document in word processing software may be different than what will print out in eGrants.

Contact the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask> if a problem arises while creating an account or while preparing or submitting an application in eGrants.

National Service Hotline hours are Monday through Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET. The two Fridays and weekends prior to the application deadline (January 9-11 and 16-19) the Hotline will be open from 10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. ET to assist applicants. If you contact the Hotline, be prepared to provide the application ID, organization name, and the *Notice* to which your organization is applying.

If technical issues prevent an applicant from submitting an application on time, please contact the National Service Hotline prior to the deadline to explain the technical issue and receive a ticket number. If the issue cannot be resolved by the deadline, the applicant must continue working with the National Service Hotline to submit via eGrants.

An application is only complete if it includes all required documentation and is received by the application due date. Incomplete applications will not be considered. All additional required documents should include the applicant organization name and Application ID number at the top of the page and are due by the application deadline at Ivette.Ramos@sos.nj.gov. E-mails should include in the Subject line, the applicant organization name and Application ID number. State/territory applicants should check the state or territory's application information to determine the process for submission of documents.

Additional documents may include (if applicable): letter(s) of support for the Governor/Mayor Initiative, evaluation reports, letters from the consortium members for Multi-focused intermediaries, and up to two evaluation briefs, reports, and/or peer reviewed articles if the applicant has a moderate or strong evidence base.

Application Fields and Page Limits

In eGrants, applicants will enter text in the following fields

- Executive Summary
- Program Design
- Organizational Capability
- Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy
- Evaluation Plan

Applications may not exceed 15 pages for the Narratives (18 pages for Multi-Focus Intermediaries), including the Executive Summary and SF 424 Facesheet, as the pages print out from eGrants. CNCS strongly encourages applicants to print out the application from the “Review and Submit” page prior to submission to check that the application does not exceed the page limit. This limit does not include the narrative portion of the evaluation plan or the logic model, budget, performance measures, or the supplementary materials, if applicable.

Reviewers will not consider submitted material that is over the page limit in the printed report, even if eGrants allows an applicant to enter and submit text over the limit. Do not submit other items not requested in the *Notice* or Application Instructions. CNCS will not review or return them.

Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM).

Applications must include a DUNS number and an Employer Identification Number. The DUNS number does not replace an Employer Identification Number. All applicants must be registered with the Systems for Award Management (SAM).

DUNS numbers may be obtained at no cost by calling the DUNS number request line at (866) 705-5711 or by applying online: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. The website indicates a 48-hour e-mail turnaround time on requests for DUNS numbers; however, we suggest registering at least 30 days in advance of the application due date. After obtaining a DUNS number register with SAM at: <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>.

SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of Federal agency contracts, grant awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of federal assistance. All grant recipients are required to maintain a valid SAM registration, which must be renewed annually. Applicants that are not already registered with SAM are urged to begin the registration process immediately in order to avoid any delays in submitting applications. Applicants must have a DUNS number in order to register with SAM.

Funding Restrictions

Grants under this program, except for full-time fixed-amount grants, are subject to the applicable Cost Principles under OMB Circulars 2 CFR Part 220 (formerly A-21), 2 CFR Part 230 (formerly A-122), or 2 CFR Part 225 (formerly A-87) and the Uniform Administrative Requirements for grants under A-102 (45 CFR Part 2541) or A-110 (45 CFR 2543 or 2 CFR Part 215).

1.7 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grant recipients are required to submit periodic project and fiscal progress reports. Reports for this program during the first year will be due as follows:

Fiscal and Program Progress Reports

Automated Progress Report	Reporting Period	Due Date
1 st Interim	9/1/15-12/31/15	1/10/16
2 nd Interim	9/1/15-3/31/16	4/10/16
3 rd Interim	9/1/15-6/30/16	7/10/16
4 th Final	9/1/15-8/31/16	10/10/16

DOS Expenditure Report (Attachment C)

Federal Periodic Expense Report (PER)

Federal Financial Report (FFR)	Reporting Period	Due Date
1 st Interim	9/1/15-12/31/15	1/10/16
2 nd Interim	9/1/15-3/31/16	4/10/16
3 rd Interim	9/1/15-6/30/16	7/10/16
4 th Final	9/1/15-8/31/16	10/10/16

SECTION 2: PROJECT GUIDELINES

The intent of this section is to provide the applicant with the program framework within which it will plan, design, and develop its proposed project to meet the purpose of this grant program. Before preparing applications, potential applicants are advised to review Section 1.1, Description of the Grant Program, of this NOFO to ensure a full understanding of the Corporation and Commission's vision and purpose for offering the program. Additionally, the information contained in Section 2 will complete the applicants' understanding of the specific considerations and requirements that are to be considered and/or addressed in their projects.

2.1 PROJECT DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

In alignment with the Serve America Act, this AmeriCorps State and National (AmeriCorps) *Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity* will focus AmeriCorps grant making in six Focus Areas identified by the Act:

- Disaster Services
- Economic Opportunity, including "My Brother's Keeper"
- Education, including STEM
- Environmental Stewardship
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families

Through this AmeriCorps Competitive and Formula Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service (hereinafter, the Commission) seeks submission of applications which can demonstrate community impact and solve community problems through an evidence-based and evidence-informed approach (e.g. performance data, research, theory of change).

CNCS Funding Priorities

CNCS seeks to prioritize the investment of national service resources in:

- Disaster Services -- improving community resiliency through disaster preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation
- Economic Opportunity -- increasing economic opportunities for communities, specifically opportunity youth (see Glossary), both as the population served and as AmeriCorps members.
- Education -- improving student academic performance including STEM
- Environment -- 21st Century Service Corps (see Glossary)
- Veterans and Military Families -- positively impacting the quality of life of veterans and improving military family strength
- Governor and Mayor Initiatives (see Glossary)
- Programing that supports My Brother's Keeper (see Glossary)
- Multi-focus intermediaries that demonstrate measureable impact and primarily serve communities with limited resources and organizational infrastructure. i.e. rural and other underserved communities. (See Glossary)

In order to receive priority consideration, applicants must demonstrate that the priority area is a significant part of the program focus and intended outcomes and must include a high quality program design. Responses that propose programs for the purpose of receiving priority consideration are not guaranteed funding.

2.2 PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Assessment Criteria

Each applicant must clearly describe a project that will deploy AmeriCorps members effectively to solve a significant community problem. CNCS and the NJ Commission urges applicants to submit a high quality application following the guidance in this NOFO and in the Application Instructions carefully. The quality of an application will be an important factor in determining whether an organization will receive funding.

Threshold Issues

Applications should reflect that they meet the threshold requirements for the grant type for which they are applying. For example: If an applicant is applying for a Professional Corps grant, its application should demonstrate that the community in which it will place professionals has an inadequate number of said professionals. If an applicant is applying for a Fixed Amount grant, the application should reflect that only full-time or less than full-time positions serving in a full-time capacity will be permitted. An application for the Governor and Mayor Initiative should clearly reflect that the application is from one Governor, one Mayor, and a minimum of two nonprofits. If the proposed service activities require specialized member qualifications and/or training (for example, tutoring programs: 45 CFR §2522.910-.940), the applicant must clearly describe how the program will meet these requirements.

CNCS will assess an applicant's strategic considerations. Applicants must check the relevant boxes in the Performance Measure tab in eGrants in order to be considered for CNCS' assessment of the strategic considerations. Applicants should only check the boxes if the strategic consideration is an intentional part of their program design and they have implementation strategies described in the application.

Application Fields

A. Executive Summary (Required - 0 percent)

Please fill in the blanks of these sentences to complete the Executive Summary.

The [Name of the organization] proposes to have [Number of] AmeriCorps members who will [what the members will be doing] in [the locations the AmeriCorps members will serve]. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for [anticipated outcome of project]. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional [number of leveraged volunteers, if applicable] who will be engaged in [what the leveraged volunteers will be doing.]

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area(s) of [Focus Area(s)].* The CNCS investment of \$[amount of request] will be matched with \$[amount of projected match], \$[amount of local, state, and federal funds] in public funding and \$[amount of non-governmental funds] in private funding.

*If the program is not operating in a CNCS' focus area, omit this sentence.

Fixed Amount grant applicants should list their leveraged resources (see Glossary) because they are not required to provide a specific amount of match, but still must raise significant additional resources to operate the program. CNCS will post all Executive Summaries of awarded grant applications on www.nationalservice.gov in the interest of transparency and Open Government.

B. Program Design (50 percent)

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

1. Problem/Need (9 points)

- The applicant clearly describes how the community problem/need will be addressed by the program.
- The applicant clearly describes how the community need/problem is prevalent and severe in communities where members will serve and the need has been well documented with relevant data.

2. Theory of Change and Logic Model (17 points)

- The applicant clearly describes the proposed intervention including the roles of AmeriCorps members and (if applicable) the roles of leveraged volunteers.
- The applicant clearly describes how the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes identified in the applicant's theory of change.
- The applicant clearly describes how the AmeriCorps members will produce significant and unique contributions to existing efforts to address the stated problem.
- All elements of the logic model are logically aligned.

The logic model shall depict:

- A summary of the community problem outlined in the narrative.
- The inputs or resources that are necessary to deliver the intervention, including:
 - Number of locations or sites in which members will provide services
 - Number of AmeriCorps members that will deliver the intervention
- The core activities that define the intervention or program model that members will implement or deliver, including:
 - The duration of the intervention (e.g., the total number of weeks, sessions or months of the intervention).
 - The dosage of the intervention (e.g., the number of hours per session or sessions per week.)
 - The target population for the intervention (e.g., disconnected youth, third graders at a certain reading proficiency level).
- The measurable outputs that result from delivering the intervention (i.e. number of beneficiaries served.) Identify which National Performance Measures will be used as output indicators.
- Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill, attitude, behavior, or condition that occur as a result of the intervention.

Programs may include short, medium, or long-term outcomes in the logic model. While performance measure outcomes should be consistent with the program's theory of change, programs are not required to measure all outcomes that are included in the logic model. The Logic Model should identify which National Performance Measures will be used as outcome indicators.

Applicants with multiple interventions should complete one Logic Model chart which incorporates each intervention.

3. Evidence Base (8 points)

Applicants will be awarded up to 8 points for providing evidence that their proposed intervention will lead to the outcomes identified in the theory of change. Applicants shall provide a description of the studies and evaluations conducted that provide evidence that the proposed intervention is effective for the proposed population and community challenge, and should describe how this evidence places them in one of the five evidence levels listed below. Applicants must fully describe how they meet the requirement of that level, using results from studies and evaluations. Applicants are strongly encouraged to describe the evidence that supports the strongest evidence tier, and all relevant evidence presented must be included in this section. This section must include specific citations of studies and/or evaluation and research reports. Applicants classifying their evidence as Moderate or Strong must submit up to two studies, evaluation reports, briefs, or peer-reviewed articles cited in this section as separate attachments. Studies should be sent to AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov and also to Ivette.Ramos@sos.nj.gov by the application deadline and include in the subject line the application ID and “evaluation studies.”

For each report cited, include the date of the report, a description that shows its relevancy to the proposed program model, the methodology used in the study, and the strength of the findings (e.g. confidence level.)

The five tiered evidence levels are:

No evidence (0 points) means that the applicant has not provided evidence that they have collected any qualitative or quantitative data to date.

Pre-preliminary evidence (1 point) means the applicant presents evidence that it has collected quantitative or qualitative data from program staff, program participants, or beneficiaries that have been used for program improvement, performance measurement reporting, and/or tracking. An example could be gathering feedback from program participants following their receipt of the intervention.

Preliminary evidence (2 points) means the applicant presents an initial evidence base that can support conclusions about the program’s contribution to observed outcomes. The evidence base consists of at least one non-experimental study conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention). A study that demonstrates improvement in program beneficiaries over time on one or more intended outcomes OR an implementation (process evaluation) study used to learn and improve program operations would constitute preliminary evidence. Examples of research that meet the standards include: 1) outcome studies that track program beneficiaries through a service pipeline and measure beneficiaries’ responses at the end of the program; and 2) pre- and post-test research that determines whether beneficiaries have improved on an intended outcome.

Moderate evidence (4 points) means the applicant presents a reasonably developed evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with moderate confidence. The evidence base consists of one or more quasi-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program (or another similar program that uses a comparable intervention) with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR two or more non-experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR one or more experimental studies of another relevant program that uses a similar intervention. Examples of research that meet the standards include: well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies that compare outcomes between the group receiving the intervention and a matched comparison group (i.e. a similar population that does not receive the intervention).

Strong evidence (8 points) means the applicant presents an evidence base that can support causal conclusions for the specific program proposed by the applicant with the highest level of confidence. This consists of one or more well-designed and well-implemented experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes.

The description of evidence in this section should include as much detailed information as possible. Applicants are advised to focus on presenting high-quality evidence from their strongest studies rather than only cursory descriptions of many studies. Reviewers will examine criteria that may include: a) how closely the program model evaluated in the studies matches the one proposed by the applicant; b) the methodological quality of the studies presented (e.g., statistical power, internal and/or external validity, sample size, etc.); c) the recency of the studies, with a preference towards studies that have been conducted within the last six years; and d) strength of the findings, with preference given to findings that show a large and persistent positive effect on participants demonstrated with confidence levels.

4. Notice Priority (3 points)

- The applicant clearly describes how its proposed program is within one or more of the 2015 AmeriCorps funding priorities as outlined on page 3 and more fully described in the Glossary.
- The applicant clearly describes how the proposed program meets all of the requirements detailed on page 3 and in the Glossary.

5. Member Training (4 points)

- The applicant clearly describes how members will receive high quality training to provide effective service.
- The applicant clearly describes how members and volunteers will be aware of, and will adhere to, the rules including prohibited activities.

6. Member Supervision (3 points)

- The applicant clearly describes how members will receive high quality guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.
- The applicant clearly describes how supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.
- The applicant clearly describes how supervisors will provide members with excellent guidance and support throughout their service.

7. Member Experience (3 points)

- AmeriCorps members will gain skills and experience as a result of their training and service that can be utilized and will be valued by future employers after their service term is completed.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will have access to meaningful service experiences and opportunities for reflection.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will have opportunities to establish connections with each other and the broader National Service network to build esprit de corps.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will develop an ethic of and skills for active and productive citizenship and will be encouraged to continue to engage in public and community service after their AmeriCorps term.
- The applicant clearly describes how the program will recruit AmeriCorps members from the communities in which the programs operate.

8. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification (3 points)

- The applicant clearly describes how members will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- The applicant clearly describes how the staff and community members where the members are serving will know they are AmeriCorps members.
- The applicant clearly describes how AmeriCorps members will be provided with and will wear service gear that prominently displays the AmeriCorps logo daily.

C. Organizational Capability (25 percent)

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

1. Organizational Background and Staffing (7 points/10 points for new applicants)

- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has the experience, staffing, and management structure to plan and implement the proposed program.
- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has adequate experience administering AmeriCorps grants or other federal grants.
- The applicant clearly describes how the organization has sufficiently engaged community members and partner organizations in planning and implementing its intervention.

As documentation of community support and commitment to the program; please procure, keep on file, but do not submit to CNCS, letter(s) from the applicant's most significant community partner(s). The letter(s) should include what the partner(s) see as the benefit to the community provided by the applicant's AmeriCorps members and what activities would not happen without the AmeriCorps members.

2. Compliance and Accountability (11 points/15 points for new applicants)

- The applicant clearly describes how the applicant's organization, in implementation and management of its AmeriCorps program, will prevent and detect compliance issues.
- The applicant clearly describes how the applicant will hold itself, subgrantees, and service site locations (if applicable) accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified.
- The applicant clearly describes how the organization will comply with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities at the grantee, subgrantee, and service site locations (if applicable).

3. Past Performance for Current Grantees and Former Grantees Only (7 points for recompeting applicants and formula Grantees) Any applicant that has received competitive or formula funding for the same project in any of the past three years must address this criteria.

- The applicant clearly describes how it has met performance measurement targets during the last three years of program operations, or, if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes how it achieved 100% member enrollment, in the most recent full year of program operations, or if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes how it achieved 100% member retention, in the most recent full year of program operations, or, if not, has an adequate corrective action plan in place.
- The applicant clearly describes any compliance issues or areas of weakness/risk identified during the last three years of program operations (if applicable) and describes an effective corrective action plan that was implemented.

D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria below. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

1. Cost Effectiveness (18 points)

- The budget is sufficient to carry out the program effectively.
- The budget aligns with the applicant's narrative.
- The program design is cost effective and the benefits justify the cost.
- The applicant has raised or describes an adequate plan to raise non-CNCS resources to fully support the program. This applies to Fixed Amount and Cost Reimbursement grants.

- The applicant, if recompeting, has a lower cost per Member Service Year (MSY – see Glossary) than approved in previous grants, or provides a compelling rationale for the same or increased cost including why this increase could not be covered by the grantee share.

Having a low Cost Per Member Service year (MSY) is a competitive advantage. New applicants that submit with a low cost per MSY and recompeting applicants that submit with a lower cost per MSY than previously funded may receive higher priority for funding. Applicants requesting a higher cost per MSY than in previous years must justify their requests. If an applicant requests above the maximum cost per MSY (see Section 5.C.), it must justify its request. Please note that such requests are rarely approved.

2. Budget Adequacy (7 points)

- Budget is submitted without mathematical errors.
- Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.
- Budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.

Applicants must fill out the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget narrative (requested information in the budget screens):

- Identify the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the project.
- Indicate the amount of non-CNCS resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash) and the sources of these commitments.

E. Evaluation Plan (Required for recompeting grantees - 0 percent)

If the applicant is competing for the first time, please enter N/A in the Evaluation Plan field since it pertains only to recompeting grantees. If the applicant is recompeting for AmeriCorps funds for the first time (see definition of “recompeting” below) the program must submit its evaluation plan in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants. If the applicant is recompeting for a subsequent time, the program must submit its evaluation report via email to AdditionalDocuments@cns.gov and Ivette.Ramos@sos.nj.gov by the application deadline, as well as an evaluation plan for the next three-year period in the Evaluation Plan field in eGrants.

Evaluation plans must include the following:

- A description of the theory of change, or why the proposed intervention is expected to produce the proposed results;
- Clear and measurable outcomes that are aligned with the theory of change and will be assessed during the evaluation;
- Concrete research questions (or hypotheses) that are clearly connected to the outcomes;
- A proposed research design for the evaluation;
- Qualifications needed for the evaluator; and
- The estimated budget.

The evaluation requirements differ depending on the amount of the grant, as described in 45 CFR §2522.710:

- If the applicant is are a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee (other than an Education Award Program grantee), and its average annual CNCS program grant is \$500,000 or more, it must arrange for an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required in §2522.730 of this subpart.
- If the applicant is are a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee whose average annual CNCS program grant is less than \$500,000, or an Education Award Program Grantee, it must

conduct an internal or an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds as required in §2522.730 of this subpart.

A program will be considered a recompeting application if it satisfies the CNCS definition of “same project” (see Glossary) and has been funded competitively for at least one complete three-year cycle. If the project satisfies the definition of same project and the applicant has completed one three-year cycle, it will be required to submit an evaluation plan. If the project satisfied the definition of same project and the applicant has completed two or more three-year cycles, the applicant will be required to submit an evaluation report as well as an evaluation plan. If the project does not satisfy the definition of recompeting, it will not be required to submit an evaluation plan, summary, or completed evaluation.

The Evaluation Plan field of eGrants does not count towards the page limit of the application; however, it does have a set character limit. Applicants should print out the report to ensure the narrative is not cut off.

State/Territory subgrantees and/or National Direct Grantees with an average annual CNCS program grant of \$500,000 or more that are recompeting for funds are eligible to apply for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. Grantees requesting approval of an alternative evaluation approach should submit a request for approval of an alternative evaluation approach along with their evaluation plan in the Evaluation Summary or Plan field in eGrants. The request should clearly explain: (a) the evaluation constraints faced by the program, (b) why the proposed approach is the most rigorous option feasible, and (c) how the proposed alternative approach will help the grantee build their evidence base. Evaluation plans should include, at a minimum, the required elements listed in this Notice. The evaluation plan must be consistent with the information submitted in the competitive funding application and in the request for approval of an alternative evaluation approach. More information on alternative evaluation approaches can be found at:

https://www.nationalserviceresources.gov/files/guidance_for_grantees_approval_of_alternative_evaluation_approach.pdf.

F. Amendment Justification (0 percent)

Enter N/A. This field will be used if the applicant is awarded a grant and needs to amend it.

G. Clarification Information (0 percent)

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter information that requires clarification in the post-review period.

H. Continuation Changes (0 percent)

Enter N/A. This field will be used to enter changes in the application narratives in continuation requests.

Prohibited Activities

In August of 2002, the Corporation published regulations concerning prohibited activities under AmeriCorps subtitle C programs. These regulations state:

While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

- (1) attempting to influence legislation;
- (2) organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- (3) assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;

- (4) impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
 - (5) engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
 - (6) participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
 - (7) engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
 - (8) providing a direct benefit to--
 - (i) a business organized for profit;
 - (ii) a labor union;
 - (iii) a partisan political organization;
 - (iv) a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and
 - (v) an organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph (g) of this section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities; and
 - (9) such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.
- (b) Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.”

Terms of Service

Programs may engage members full-time or less than full-time. Full-time members must serve at least 1700 hours during a period of not less than nine months and not more than one year. Half-time members must serve at least 900 hours during a period of one year as indicated in the approved budget. No member can serve less than 300 hours during a one-year period. Programs may propose at least 300 hours for minimum-time, at least 450 hours for quarter-time, and at least 675 hours for reduced half-time members based on the program design. However, within a program, we require all reduced half-time, quarter-time, and minimum-time members to serve the same number of hours. If any reduced part-time program has a need for greater flexibility, consideration will be given to a proposal for two different sets of hours within the same program if adequately justified.

Term of Service	Minimum # of Hours	Ed Award	MSY
Full Time	1700	\$5,730	1.000
One Year Half Time	900	\$2,865	0.500
Reduced Half Time	675	\$2,182.78	0.381

Quarter Time	450	\$1,515.55	0.265
Minimum Time	300	\$1,212.44	0.212

A living allowance is not a wage. **In New Jersey, AmeriCorps members are not eligible for unemployment insurance, family leave or disability.**

Child Care and Health Insurance

Child Care

The Corporation directly funds child care for any full-time member who is eligible for and needs such assistance to participate in the program. They pay 100% of the allowance as defined by payment rates of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). They can provide technical assistance to a program and can help a grantee determine member eligibility, provider eligibility, and child care allowance. Direct payments will be made to the child care providers. Therefore, do not include child care assistance in your AmeriCorps budget. The Corporation bases member eligibility for child care on need. Members' needs must be consistent with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990:

- total family income of members must be less than 75% of the state median income, as defined by the state under CCDBG guidelines;
- members must reside with and be a parent or guardian of a child under the age of 13.

When a grantee accepts members in their program that are receiving and continue to receive child care assistance from other sources such as a parent or guardian, they are ineligible for child care from your program. On the other hand, if members become ineligible for assistance because of their enrollment in the grantee's program, or the member certifies that he or she needs child care to participate in the program, the grantee must provide child care.

Health Insurance

Grantees must provide full-time members with health insurance at the time of acceptance into the program if the member is not otherwise covered by a health insurance policy. If a member who previously had coverage loses it through no deliberate act of his or her own, such as parental or spousal job loss, the grantee must provide the member with basic health insurance that meets Corporation requirements.

In general, the Corporation does not pay the costs of health benefits for half-time members unless they serve full-time for a sustained period of time. For example, members may receive benefits when they serve in a summer program for thirty-five hours per week with other members who receive health benefits.

Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities

Increasing the participation of individuals with disabilities in national and community service programs is a key interest of the Corporation. All AmeriCorps programs are required to actively reach out to people with disabilities for inclusion in AmeriCorps service.

Participation in National Days of Service

As part of the National Service Network, there are a number of opportunities for grantees to take

part in national service days. The Corporation and Commission expect all national service programs, including AmeriCorps programs, to participate in one or more days of service, including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday and AmeriCorps Week. In addition, the Corporation and Commission expect programs with AmeriCorps members to participate in other national service activities such as common opening ceremonies (including the administration of an oath or affirmation), orientations, and training.

State Commission Training and Events

Program Manager Trainings and Meetings

All program managers must attend a week-long orientation known as Starting Strong held in August, 2015, and any other training (e.g., financial management) developed for project directors during the contract period. Project directors are also required to participate in all monthly conference calls or meetings. New programs may also be required to attend a one-day Pre-Starting Strong session in July, 2015.

In constructing the budget, figure in the cost for transportation, meals, and possible overnight accommodations related to all Corporation or Commission training sessions.

Statewide Corpsmember Trainings and Events

All corpsmembers and project directors are required to attend the following trainings/events:

- AmeriCorps Launch – Fall 2015
- End-of-the-Year Training – Spring 2016
- Other statewide training such as Cultural Diversity or Disaster Preparedness.

In constructing the budget, figure in the cost of transportation to all of the training sessions.

2.3 BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

Calculating Cost Per Member Service Year (\$2522.485)

CNCS considers comparative costs per MSY in making funding decisions. One MSY is equivalent to at least 1700 service hours, a full-time AmeriCorps position. The CNCS cost per MSY is determined by dividing the CNCS share of budgeted grant costs by the number of MSYs requested. It does not include child care or the value of the education award a member may earn. The maximum amount an applicant may request from CNCS per MSY is determined on an annual basis. Continuation and re-competing grantees requesting a higher cost per MSY than in the previous year must include a compelling rationale for this increased cost. This applies even if the increased cost per MSY is less than the maximum.

For the program year 2015/16 the maximum cost per MSY is as follows:

Grant Program	Maximum
State Commission Average	\$13,730
Professional Corps	Up to \$1,000
Full-time Fixed Amount Grants	\$13,430

Segal AmeriCorps Education Award for FY 2014

AmeriCorps members serving in programs funded with FY 2015 dollars who successfully complete a term of service will receive an Education Award from the National Service Trust of \$5,730 for a year of full-time service, with correspondingly smaller awards for less-than-full-time service. The amount of the Education Award is determined on the basis of the Pell Grant award. A member has up to seven years after the term of service has ended to use the award.

Member Living Allowance

The minimum fiscal year 2015/16 living allowance for a full-time member is **\$12,530**.

The maximum living allowance that may be paid with all sources of funds is **\$25,060** for full-time members and is set for anything less than full-time according to the chart on page below.

A living allowance to half-time, reduced half-time, quarter-time, and minimum-time members is not required, however, due to the high cost of living in New Jersey the Commission recommends providing some level of living allowance. Applicants that choose to provide any half-time members with a living allowance may use the chart on the following page to determine the maximum Corporation share.

While Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to submit detailed budgets, they are still required to provide a living allowance that complies with the minimum and maximum requirements to members. Most Fixed Amount grant applicants are not required to indicate that amount in the application and should request those positions as “without living allowance” in the budget.

Professional Corps Grantees must provide members a living allowance or salary, which must meet the minimum, but may exceed the maximum living allowance set in the Living Allowance Table below. Professional Corps member salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget.

Term of Service	Min. # of Hours	Ed Award	MSY	Max. Total Living Allowance	Minimum Living Allowance
Full Time	1700	\$5,730	1.000	\$25,060	\$12,530
Half Time	900	\$2,865	0.500	\$13,265	\$ 6,634
Reduced HT	675	\$2,182.78	0.381	\$ 9,950	\$ 4,975
Quarter Time	450	\$1,515.55	0.265	\$ 6,635	\$ 3,317
Minimum Time	300	\$1,212.44	0.212	\$ 4,420	\$ 2,211

Matching Requirements (§§ 2521.35 through §2521.95)

Program requirements, including requirements on match, are located in the AmeriCorps regulations, modified by 2008 appropriations language. The appropriations language includes an important change in how AmeriCorps programs match federal funds. It replaces the regulatory 15% minimum member support and 33% minimum program operating match with a single overall minimum match of 24% for the first three-year cycle, match gradually increases every three years to 50% by year ten, according to the minimum overall share chart found in CFR 2521.60. Current grantees remain where they are in terms of match requirements. For example, a grantee entering the sixth year of funding will be required to match at 34% as specified in the chart.

	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
<i>Min Overall Share</i>	26%	30%	34%	38%	42%	46%	50%

There is no match requirement for fixed-amount grants. However, the fixed-amount grant does not cover all costs. Fixed-amount grantees provide the additional resources needed to operate the program, but are not required to track or report on them.

Programs that use other federal funds as match for an AmeriCorps grant report the amount and source of these funds to CNCS on the Federal Financial Report (FFR).

The living allowance or salary provided to Professional Corps AmeriCorps members does not count toward the matching requirement.

Carryover-Corpsmembers

Carry-over corpsmembers are those members who, for a variety of reasons, will complete their term of service after the end date of the contract (August 31). It is the intention of the NJ Commission to reduce the number of carry-over corpsmembers. To this end, all grantees are urged to bring on their corpsmembers as early as possible in the program year.

Grantees are instructed under the terms of this NOFO to enroll full-time corpsmembers between September 1 and December 31, 2015 only. Part-time corpsmembers must be hired before May 14, 2016. Under the Department of State contract, no corpsmembers (full-time or part-time) may serve beyond December 31, 2016 and the grantee must ensure that the enrolled corpsmember can obtain the necessary hours of service prior to the contract end date. Summer members must be enrolled prior to June 30, 2016 and cannot serve beyond December 31, 2016.

Corpsmembers whose terms of service extend beyond August 31, 2015 must continue to be paid from the contract under which they were enrolled. Grantees must request a modification to their contract (Part A) to pay these corpsmembers for the September "Contract Modification" and must be received 90 days prior to the end of the contract (June 2, 2016).

SECTION 3: COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

3.1 GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLYING

To apply for a grant under this NOFO, applicants must prepare and submit a complete application. The application must be a response to the state's vision as articulated in Section 1: Grant Program Information of this NOFO. Additionally, programs must be planned, designed and developed in accordance with the program framework articulated in Section 2: Project Guidelines of this NOFO.

3.2 EVALUATION OF FIRST-YEAR APPLICATIONS

3.2.1 State-level Review Process

All applications for AmeriCorps Competitive grants will be reviewed through the Commission.

In year one, the application is evaluated and rated by a panel of three readers. The evaluation panel consists of one reader from the originating office, one from another office within the NJ Department of State, and one reader external to the NJ Department of State who is knowledgeable in the content area. Readers of grant applications for the NJ Department of State certify that no conflict of interest exists that would create an undue advantage or disadvantage for any applicant in the application evaluation and scoring process.

Applications are evaluated on the basis of quality, comprehensiveness, completeness, accuracy and appropriateness of response to the guidelines and requirements of the governing NOFO. Applicants may request information about their evaluation scores by writing to the NJ Commission on National and Community Service. The Commission reserves the right to withdraw from consideration any application that does not include each and every component to be evaluated and scored in the evaluation process.

Applications must receive a score of at least 75 points out of 100 and include all required components to be eligible for funding. Eligible applications are ranked and funded in descending order, from highest to lowest score, until available funds have been used. In the event of a tied score at or above the NJ Department of State's cutoff score of 75, the NJ Department of State will select the applicant with the highest combined score for the Program Design section.

3.2.2 Federal-level Review Process

1. Criteria

The assessment of applications involves a wide range of factors and considerations. CNCS will engage external reviewers to provide insight and input with respect to eligible applications. In addition, CNCS staff will apply their experience and expertise in evaluating applications. In the end, the review and selection process will produce a diversified set of high-quality programs that represent the priorities and selection factors described in this NOFO.

Specifically, the review and selection process will:

A. Identify eligible applications that satisfy the following considerations:

- High alignment with narrative assessment criteria
- High alignment with priorities outlined in the *Notice*, including priority-specific requirements as detailed in the Glossary
- Relative risk and opportunity

B. Consider:

- State/Territory Commission rank and recommendations on state applicants
- State/Territory Commission input on National Direct applications, except federally-recognized Indian Tribes

C. Yield a diversified portfolio based on the following strategic considerations:

- Meaningful representation of
 - Geographic diversity
 - Rural communities (see definition in Glossary)
 - Small and medium programs
 - Single and multi-state programs
 - Faith- and community-based organizations
- Focus area representation
- Organizations and/or program models that recruit and engage traditionally underrepresented populations as AmeriCorps members and expand opportunities to serve as AmeriCorps members

2. Review and Selection Process

A. Compliance Review

CNCS staff will review all applications submitted to CNCS to determine compliance with eligibility, deadline, and completeness requirements. In order to be compliant and advance to External Review, an applicant must satisfy all the following requirements:

- Submit a Notice of Intent to Apply by the deadline.
- Submit an application and all required additional documents by the application submission deadline.
- Submit an application that is complete, in that it contains all required elements and additional documents and follows the instructions provided in this *Notice*.

B. External Review

Each application will be reviewed by external reviewers. External reviewers will assess applications based on the Program Design and Past Performance criteria. External reviewers will be recruited and selected on the basis of demonstrated knowledge of AmeriCorps programming, and/or the selection criteria and focus areas. All external reviewers will be screened for conflicts of interest.

C. Post Review Quality Control (Quality Control)

After the external reviewers complete their assessment, staff will review the results for fairness and consistency. Some applications may be selected for a Quality Control assessment and review. This additional level of review may be used to assess:

- Applications ranked first by a State/Territory Commission that received low scores in External Review.
- Applications for which there were significant panel anomalies.
- Applications submitted by high-performing current grantees that received a low score in External Review.

D. Selection of Applications for Internal Review

Applications will advance to Internal Review based on the results of the External Review and Quality Control, as well as consideration of the priorities and the strategic considerations outlined in the *Notice*. Those applications that do not advance to Internal Review will not be recommended for funding.

E. Internal Review

CNCS staff will assess the entire application. Some applicants may receive requests to provide clarifying information and/or make changes to their application including changes to the budget. This information is used by CNCS staff in making final recommendations. Applications may be recommended for funding even if they are not asked clarification questions. A request for clarification does not guarantee a grant award. Failure to respond to requests for additional information in a timely fashion will result in the removal of applications from consideration.

CNCS staff will determine which applications to recommend for selection based on their assessment of the applicants that move from External Review and Quality Control into Internal Review, and Clarification in light of the *Notice*'s priorities and strategic considerations.

F. Risk Assessment Evaluation

CNCS staff will evaluate the risks to the program posed by each applicant, including conducting due diligence to ensure an applicant's ability to manage federal funds. This evaluation is in addition to the evaluation of the applicant's eligibility for funding or the quality of its application on the basis of the Selection Criteria. Results from this evaluation will inform funding decisions. If CNCS determines that an award will be made, special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk assessed may be applied to the award. In evaluating risks, CNCS may consider the following:

- Financial stability;
- Quality of financial management systems and ability to meet the administrative standards prescribed in applicable OMB Guidance;
- History of performance as reflected in the applicant's record in managing previous CNCS awards, cooperative agreements, or procurement awards, including:
 - Timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements, and
 - If applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards;
- Information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information, such as—
 - Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS),
 - Dun and Bradstreet, or
 - "Do Not Pay";
- Reports and findings from single audits performed under OMB Circular A-133 and findings of any other available audits;
- IRS Tax Form 990;
- An applicant organization's annual report;
- Publicly available information including information from an applicant organization's website; and
- The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

G. Selection for Funding

With the goal of a diversified portfolio based on the *Notice* priorities and strategic considerations, the staff will recommend a portfolio for consideration by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO.) The CEO will select the final portfolio from the applicants that advanced to Internal Review.

H. Feedback to Applicants

Following grant awards, each applicant will receive the results of External and, if applicable, Internal Review pertaining to their application. Feedback will be based on the review of the original application and will not reflect any information that may have been provided in response to clarification questions, if any.

CNCS is committed to transparency in grantmaking. The following information pertaining to this competition for new and recompeting applications will be published on the CNCS website (<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/open-government-initiative/transparency/results-grants-competition>), within 90 business days after all grants are awarded:

- A blank template of the external review form.
- A list of all compliant applications submitted.
- Executive summaries of all compliant applications submitted by the applicants as part of the application.
- Data extracted from the Standard Form 424 Face Sheet (SF424) and Program Narrative submitted by applicants for successful applications.
- Summaries of external reviewers' comments for successful applications.
- A list of external reviewers who completed the review process.

3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

CNCS will award grants following the grant selection announcement. We anticipate announcing the results of this competition depending on the availability of appropriations. CNCS expects that successful State and Territory Commissions and National Directs will be notified **no later than May 8, 2015**, contingent on timely full year appropriations.

3.3 APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please use the following link to access the Application Instructions (these will post on October 22, 2014) and the 2015 Performance Measures Instructions. Follow the instructions for New or Re-Competing.

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2015/ameri-corps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2015#technicalassistancecall>

The CNCS web site will also have a listing of technical assistance conference calls, Frequently Asked Questions, and other resources.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE DUE DATE FOR APPLICANTS TO THIS NJ COMMISSION NOFO IS MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2014. THE DATE OF JANUARY 21, 2014 IS THE N.J. COMMISSION'S DUE DATE TO CNCS.

2015 *Notice*

Glossary

GLOSSARY

21st Century Service Corps (21st CSC): The 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) is a bold national effort to put young Americans and veterans to work protecting, restoring, and enhancing America's great outdoors. The 21CSC, built on the legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps, will complete high quality, cost effective projects on public and tribal lands and waters across the nation. The **21CSC goals:**

Put Americans to work: The 21CSC will provide service, training, education and employment opportunities for thousands of young Americans and veterans, including low income and disadvantaged youth.

Preserve, protect, and promote America's greatest gifts: The 21CSC will protect, restore and enhance public and tribal lands and waters as well as natural, cultural, and historical resources and treasures. With high-quality, cost-effective project work, the 21CSC will also increase public access and use while spurring economic development and outdoor recreation.

Build America's future: Through service to America, the 21CSC will help develop a generation of skilled workers, educated and active citizens, future leaders, and stewards of natural and cultural resources, communities and the nation.

In order to qualify for this priority area, applicants must demonstrate that they are a 21CSC member organization. Applications for membership are reviewed quarterly. Instructions for applicants are available in the Federal Register Notice, here: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-04-11/pdf/2014-08101.pdf>

Capacity Building: Grants also will provide support for capacity building activities provided by national service participants. As a general rule, CNCS considers capacity building activities to be *indirect services* that enable CNCS-supported organizations to provide more, better, and sustained *direct services* in CNCS' six focus areas. Capacity building activities cannot be solely intended to support the administration or operations of the organization. Examples of capacity building activities include recruiting and/or managing community volunteers; implementing effective volunteer management practices; completing community assessments that identify goals and recommendations; developing new systems and business processes (technology, performance management, training, etc.); or enhancing existing systems and business processes.

Cost Reimbursement Grants: These grants fund a portion of program operating costs and member living allowances with flexibility to use all of the funds for allowable costs regardless of whether or not the program recruits and retains all AmeriCorps members. Cost reimbursement grants include a formal matching requirement and require the submission of a budget and financial reports.

Encore Programs: Congress set a goal that 10 percent of AmeriCorps funding should support encore service programs that engage a significant number of participants age 55 or older. CNCS seeks to meet that 10 percent target in this competition and encourages encore programs to apply.

Education Award Grants (EAP) fixed amount grant: Programs apply for a small fixed amount per MSY, can enroll less than full-time members, and use their own resources to cover all other costs. Programs can access funds under the grant based on enrolling the full complement of members supported under the grant. As with full-time fixed amount grants, there are no specific match or financial reporting requirements.

Enrollment Rate: Enrollment rate is calculated as slots filled, plus refill slots filled, divided by slots awarded.

Fixed Amount Grants (non EAP): These fixed amount grants are available for programs that enroll full-time members or less than full-time members that are serving in a full time capacity only, including Professional Corps. These grants provide a fixed amount of funding per Member Service Year (MSY) that is substantially lower than the amount required to operate the program. Organizations use their own or other resources to cover the remaining cost. Programs are not required to submit budgets or financial reports, there is no specific match requirement, and programs are not required to track and maintain documentation of match. Professional Corps programs applying for operational funding through a Fixed Amount Grant must submit a budget in support of their request for operational funds. However, CNCS provides only a portion of the cost of running the program and organizations must still raise the additional resources needed to run the program. Programs can access all of the funds, provided they recruit and retain the members supported under the grant based on the MSY level awarded.

Governor and Mayor Initiative: CNCS will accept one application per state in each year's new and recompetite competition. If a state has a Governor and Mayor Initiative in continuation status, the state commission can submit a new application. However, CNCS is interested in increasing the number of states that have Governor and Mayor's Initiative as well as funding high quality program designs.

The application must address a pressing challenge the Governor wishes to solve in her or his state. A Governor must apply with one Mayor in his or her state and a minimum of two nonprofits. In conjunction with the Mayor, the Governor will be responsible for identifying and selecting those nonprofits that are best able to achieve a demonstrated positive impact on the problem. The application should include letters of commitment from all relevant parties. If the Governor and Mayor have not yet selected partnering nonprofit entities, they should describe the process that the Governor and Mayor will use to select the nonprofit entities. The application, submitted to the State Commission, will respond to the application criteria and explain how several nonprofits working together, with the Governor's office serving as a convener, will effectively deploy AmeriCorps members for a collective impact. Only the Governor, Mayor, their designated government office (but not the state commission), or a public university may apply for grants under the Governor and Mayor initiative. Applications from other entities will be deemed non-compliant and will not be considered under this initiative.

For example, a Governor and a Mayor in a state could conclude the most pressing challenge facing the state is its high school graduation rate. The Governor and/or Mayor would submit one application describing:

- How the partnership will be organized and AmeriCorps resources will be allocated between the partnering entities (State, locality, and nonprofit entities).
- The proposed theory of change and program model.
- How they will utilize an identified consortium of nonprofits that are well positioned to achieve outcomes identified in the theory of change.

Applications submitted as part of the Governor and Mayor Initiative must check the “Governor and Mayor Initiative” box in the Performance Measure tab and email a letter of endorsement cosigned by the Governor and Mayor, as well as signed letters of commitment from partnering nonprofits to additionaldocuments@cns.gov by the application due date in order to be considered for this Initiative.

Member Service Year (MSY): One Member Service Year (MSY) is equivalent to a full-time AmeriCorps position (at least 1700 service hours.)

Multi-focus Intermediates: Given the capacity required to successfully apply for and implement an AmeriCorps program, CNCS recognizes that severely under-resourced communities may have limited applicant options, either based on the size of the non profits or the lack of available matching funds. Thus it may be necessary to engage an eligible applicant that will develop an application and oversee the implementation of an AmeriCorps program that engages multiple grassroots non profits/eligible applicants that individually do not have the necessary organizational or fundraising capacity to apply for and run an AmeriCorps program independently. Given the desire to address community needs holistically, the non profits/eligible applicants that make up the consortium may have different focus areas and thus the non profit/eligible applicant intermediary will be multi-focused.

Applications seeking consideration under this priority must demonstrate that they will be serving in severely under-resourced communities, and how the activities provided by the consortium collectively address a compelling community need or set of needs. The applicant must demonstrate that they have sufficient financial and management capacity to act as an umbrella organization for the consortia.

The nonprofit/eligible applicant intermediary should submit one application which describes:

- How the partnership will be organized and AmeriCorps resources will be allocated between the partnering entities (intermediary and consortia members).
- The proposed theory(ies) of change and program model(s).
- How they will utilize an identified consortium of nonprofits/eligible applicants that are well positioned to achieve outcomes identified in the theory of change.

Applicants must email memoranda of understanding or signed letters of commitment from all members of the consortia to additionaldocuments@cns.gov and Ivette.Ramos@sos.nj.us by the application due date in order to be considered for this Initiative. .

My Brother’s Keeper: President Obama launched the My Brother’s Keeper initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential.

Through this initiative, the Administration is joining with cities and towns, businesses, and foundations who are taking important steps to connect young people to mentoring, support networks, and the skills they need to find a good job or go to college and work their way into the middle class.

My Brother’s Keeper is focused on six milestones:

1. Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn: All children should have a healthy start and enter school ready – cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally.

2. Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade: All children should be reading at grade level by age 8 – the age at which reading to learn becomes essential.

3. Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career: Every American child should have the option to attend postsecondary education and receive the education and training needed for quality jobs of today and tomorrow.

4. Successfully Entering the Workforce: All those who want jobs should be able to find work that allows them to support themselves and their families.

5. Keeping Kids on Track and Giving Them Second Chances: All children should be safe from violent crime; and individuals who are confined should receive the education, training and treatment they need for a second chance.

In order to qualify for this priority area, applicants must demonstrate that their program addresses one or more of the six milestones.

Opportunity Youth: Opportunity youth are economically disadvantaged individuals age 16-24 who are disconnected from school or work for at least six months prior to service. CNCS defines “economically disadvantaged” consistent with the definition used in the member development performance measures, “Receiving or meet the income eligibility requirements to receive: TANF, Food Stamps (SNAP), Medicaid, SCHIP, Section 8 housing assistance.” CNCS defines “disconnected from school or work” as unemployed, underemployed, and not in school for at least six months prior to service. A member who was not economically disadvantaged prior to becoming an AmeriCorps member but became economically disadvantaged because the living allowance was low enough to make them eligible for SNAP, etc cannot be counted as economically disadvantaged. In order to apply under this priority the applicant must demonstrate the programmatic elements they will implement in order to recruit and support opportunity youth as members, and a substantial portion of their requested MSYs must fall into this category.

Professional Corps: Professional Corps programs recruit and place qualified members in positions as teachers, health care providers, police officers, engineers, or other professionals in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals. CNCS’ assumption is that Professional Corps will be covering the operating expenses associated with the AmeriCorps program through non CNCS funds and thus will not be requesting operating funds as part of their applications. CNCS will consider operating funds of up to \$1,000 per MSY if an applicant is able to demonstrate in its narrative and supporting budget materials significant organizational financial need and challenges to raising non CNCS resources. Professional Corps members’ salaries are paid entirely by the organizations with which the members serve, and are not included in the budget. In order to be considered for funding, applicants must demonstrate that there are an inadequate number of professionals in the community(ies) where the corps seeks to place members. These grants can either be fixed amount or cost reimbursement grants.

Retention Rate: Retention rate is calculated as the number of members exited with award (full or partial award) divided by the number of members enrolled.

Rural: CNCS uses rural-urban commuting area (RUCA) codes to classify program addresses as either rural or urban for analytic purposes. RUCA codes classify U.S. census tracts using measures of population density, urbanization, and daily commuting. Census tracts with an urban

cluster population less than 50,000 are considered rural (RUCA codes 4 – 10). Applicants are encouraged to designate themselves as serving rural communities if some or all service locations are in rural areas as defined by RUCA codes or if the program can provide other compelling evidence that the program is rural in the narrative portion of the application. This self-designation will be considered in grant-making decisions.

For more information about RUCA codes, please visit the USDA website found here:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-commuting-area-codes.aspx>

The Office of Grants Management uses Beale Codes when assessing alternative match requirements.

Same Project: Two projects will be considered the same if they: Address the same issue areas, Address the same priorities, Address the same objectives, Serve the same target communities and population, Utilize the same sites, Use the same program staff and members
Programs need to get approval from their CNCS program officers to be considered a new project.

